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EDITOR'S MISCELLANY



DR. FLEXNER'S VALUABLE DISCOVERY.—The interest in antitoxines and serum therapy which is so prevalent just now is very active among those in the shadow of Johns Hopkins Hospital because of the prominence into which Dr. Flexner has come through his new discovery. Some who have been interested in this work will remember that there were strenuous efforts made last summer at the Wilson Sanitarium to find some cure or relief for the dread cholera infantum which carries off such a multitude of little ones during the warm months. It was decided that Shiga's bacillus, the cause of epidemic dysentery among adults, was also accountable for cholera infantum, and the possibility of an antitoxine being made which would cure this malady in the same way that diphtheria has been so successfully treated precipitated investigations which will probably result in the saving of many infant lives. The death of John Rockefeller McCormick of cholera infantum prompted his grandfather, John D. Rockefeller, to give two hundred thousand dollars to be spent in searching for a cure for this deadly "summer complaint."

In the laboratories where investigations are being furthered and serums made, workers are to be seen in surgeon's attire—white clothes, caps, and shoes. The interiors of laboratories and stables are coated with white enamel, and all other details are ideally hygienic. The horses to be used in preparing antitoxine are, upon their arrival at these unique stables, given injections of mallein, which seems to accentuate symptoms of any disease from which they may be suffering. If the results of these injections are negative, the subjects are deemed eligible for further experimental use. Cultures containing the desired organism are introduced into bouillon which has previously been carefully filtered, sterilized, and put through other refining processes, and the whole is put into an incubator. The germs rapidly multiply under these favorable conditions, and in a given time the fluid is impregnated with them and their products, which transform it into a high poison to the animal tissues. After having been brought to a definite concentration, a small amount of the fluid is injected into perhaps a guinea-pig, which, if all is favorable, dies of the disease, the origin of which is attributed to this organism. If the experimenters are satisfied that death was caused by this disease alone, similar injections are given to the horses in amounts so small as to produce symptoms of greater or less severity, but not death. Upon recovery, which takes place in about ten days, a second and larger injection is given, the subsequent attack of the disease being milder than the first. In other words, the horse's tissues in withstanding the influence of disease germs once have acquired still stronger resistance against a second invasion of the same disease, or something akin to immunity. These successive and increasing doses are continued till the individual horses are able to take injections of perhaps five hundred cubic centimetres of the infected fluid with no ill effect, their powers of resistance having steadily increased.

This point having been reached, each horse is bled eight thousand cubic centimetres each month. The blood withdrawn is carefully protected from contaminating influences and allowed to clot, then all the serum is extracted and its strength determined. After passing through the various stages of purification this serum, containing the material which is capable of neutralizing or overpowering the activity of the disease germ from which it has been indirectly made, is sealed up in small tubes and distributed for use among physicians.

We are told that Dr. Flexner does not hope to perfect this valuable serum till next summer, but is confident of its specific action when finally given to the public for use.

Because of his discovery of an antitoxine for cholera infantum, Dr. Flexner has received his appointment of directorship of the fifteen million dollar Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research.—C. C. VON B. in *Johns Hopkins Alumni Magazine*.

MISS MARY M. BARTELME, president of the Chicago Business Women's Club, says: "I am constantly urging upon the business women I know the necessity of a life, both social and intellectual, outside of their business. It is a vital question. The woman who merely works, eats, sleeps, and works again will never make a successful member either of the business or the social world. By that I mean, of course, successful in the broadest sense. The person who really succeeds is not the one who makes the most money, but she who is most broad-minded, influential, and useful."

A POST-GRADUATE course for nurses, open to the graduates of any general hospital in good standing, has recently been established in the Manhattan Eye and Ear Hospital, New York City, and instruction is given by the house surgeon and others covering a period of from four to six months' time in the various wards and surgical rooms.

MRS. ELLEN M. RICHARDS, of the Institute of Technology, spoke at a recent meeting of the Massachusetts Association of Boards of Health, urging that measures should be taken to provide instruction for the community at large in regard to proper sanitary conditions. She suggested that Health Boards might do much by pointing out the way and inviting coöperation of various civic bodies.

Mrs. Joanna von Wagner, a health inspector of Yonkers, N. Y., illustrated, in a recital of the work she had done for years, Mrs. Richards's idea of what it might be possible to do in Boston. She said she felt "helpless and hopeless" when she first reviewed the situation among the tenement-house dwellers of Yonkers, but after a while she instructed them in the value of fresh air, cleanliness, etc. At first she represented a civic league, and met with some rebuffs, but now, as a health officer, she is welcomed everywhere.

New York City has nine women health inspectors, she said, but their work is lacking in effectiveness because they are not permitted to give personal instruction to people on elementary matters of domestic science.

AN ENGLISH IMPRESSION OF AMERICAN MEDICAL INSTITUTIONS.—The *Medical Chronicle* for December contains an admirable, and, let us add, gratifying, account by Dr. Thomas Harris, of Manchester, of his impressions derived during a tour of New York, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Montreal "with the object of seeing the construction and management of their chief hospitals and medical educational institutions." Our nursing system comes in for unstinted praise. "America learnt, I believe, her nurse-training methods from this country, but I think we must admit that she has now excelled her teacher. The nursing department in American hospitals is generally very efficient. At nearly every hospital I was much impressed by the type of nurse I met. The nurses evidently have a good general education before undertaking their purely professional work, and I had no doubt that there was a higher intellectual standard among the nurses of the American hospitals than is the case in this country. The training of the nurse is, I believe, very complete."